

Message Text

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72

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 EUR-25 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0601

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 9384

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJECT: EVOLVING ISRAELI PERCEPTIONS OF US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP

REF: TEL AVIV 8878

1. SUMMARY. ISRAELIS ARE BEGINNING TO SENSE THAT US SUPPORT OF ISRAEL, WITH ITS SIGNIFICANT COST TO OTHER US INTERESTS, MAY NOT BE OF A GREAT NET STRATEGIC VALUE TO US. THEY GREETED SECRETARY'S PEKING NEWS CONFERENCE SUGGESTION OF POSSIBLE US-ISRAEL DEFENSE TIE WITH MIXED FEELINGS, WONDERING IF SUCH TIE WOULD BE MEANINGFUL IF ISRAEL IS STRATEGIC LIABILITY FOR US. AT SAME TIME ISRAELIS SEEM CONFIDENT THESE DAYS THAT THEY CAN RELY ON CONTINUED US SUPPORT. POINT IS ALSO BEING MADE IN PRESS AND BY OUR CONTACTS THAT ISRAEL NEEDS TO NURTURE ITS US RELATIONSHIP AND TAKE US VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT. BUT NEED TO TAKE US VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT IS CAUSING CONSIDERABLE UNEASE. SUSPICION IS WIDESPREAD THAT US ANTICIPATES MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL ACQUIRING ONLY INSUBSTANTIAL AMOUNTS OF TERRITORY AND THAT STIFF US-ISRAELI DISAGREEMENT OVER THIS ISSUE IS IN OFFING. BUT (FOR WHATEVER REASON) ISRAELIS STOP SHORT OF PREDICTING US WILL IMPOSE SUCH
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SETTLEMENT ON ISRAEL. THEY SEEM TO FEEL THAT, IF DISAGREEMENT

WITH US COMES, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO WORK THINGS OUT, ALTHOUGH THEY APPARENTLY ARE NOT SURE HOW. END SUMMARY.

2. AS IS REFLECTED IN PRESS COMMENTARIES AS WELL, MOST ISRAELIS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN IN RECENT DAYS CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT KEEPING ISRAEL STRONG SERVES US STRATEGIC AND GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS, ALTHOUGH THEY GENERALLY VOLUNTEER OBSERVATION THAT THEY REALIZE US IS AT THE SAME TIME PAYING SIGNIFICANT PRICE CURRENTLY FOR ITS CONTINUED SUPPORT OF ISRAEL, IN TERMS OF SHRINKING OIL SUPPLIES, NATO DISARRAY, AND STRAINS ON US-USSR DETENTE. HOWEVER, SOME OF OUR ISRAELI CONTACTS TELL US THAT NOW, AFTER SEEING TROUBLES US IS FACING BECAUSE OF ITS MIDDLE EAST STAND, THEY NO LONGER BELIEVE US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL NECESSARILY DOES SERVE US STRATEGIC AND GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS, BUT ONLY SERVES NEGATIVE PURPOSE OF PRESERVING US CREDIBILITY GLOBALLY CONTEXT OF US ALLIANCES OR CLOSE TIES WITH NATIONS POTENTIALLY SUBJECT TO SOVIET THREATS.

3. WITH THIS BACKGROUND, ONE CAN UNDERSTAND THAT SECRETARY'S PEKING NEWS CONFERENCE AT WHICH QUESTION OF US SECURITY

GUARANTEE FOR ISRAEL AROSE MET WITH MIXED FEELINGS IN ISRAEL. SOME HAVE SAID THAT IF US WANTS DEFENSE TIE WITH ISRAEL FOR PURPOSES OF ADVANCING US OWN STRATEGIC INTERESTS, THIS WOULD BE GOOD; BUT IF US WERE TO OFFER ISRAEL A DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT "OUT OF PITY," THIS WOULD BE BAD NEWS. THEY HAVE NOTED PARTICULARLY SECRETARY'S ITEMIZATION OF REASONS ("EMOTIONAL TIES," ISRAEL'S "DEMOCRATIC TRADITION," AND "GOING CONCERN") WHY US SUPPORTS ISRAEL, AS WELL AS ABSENCE OF REFERENCE HERE TO US GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS. THEY DO NOT NECESSARILY CONCLUDE FROM SECRETARY'S REMARKS THAT ISRAEL TIE IN FACT IS OF NO GEOPOLITICAL VALUE TO US, BUT THEY SENSE THIS ASPECT MIGHT NOT BE VERY IMPORTANT.

4. IMPORTANT THING IS THAT, REGARDLESS WHETHER GIVEN ISRAEL BELIEVES US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IS BASED ON US STRATEGIC INTERESTS OR NOT, ISRAELIS CURRENTLY SEEM CONFIDENT THAT US SUPPORT WILL NOT BE REDUCED OR WITHDRAWN IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THIS IS IMPORTANT ASSET FOR MRS MEIR'S GOVT SUGGESTION THAT WE HAVE HEARD OCCASIONALLY IN PAST THAT US, BECAUSE OF VIETNAM EXHAUSTION OR DOMESTIC PROBLEMS, IS WEAK REED FOR ISRAEL TO LEAN ON IS NOW CONFIDENTIAL

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TOTALLY ABSENT. POINT BEING MADE REPEATEDLY IN PRESS AND BY OUR CONTACTS IS THAT (A) US IS ISRAEL'S ONLY REED TO LEAN ON AND IS AFTER ALL WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL NATION; AND (B) ISRAEL MUST BE EXTREMELY CAREFUL TO NURTURE ITS US CONNECTION, MEANING ISRAEL MUST TAKE FULLY INTO ACCOUNT US ADVICE AND ANY PROBLEMS ISRAEL ACTIONS CAN CAUSE US.

5. CONCLUSION THAT US ADVICE MUST BE HEEDDED IS CAUSING

CONSIDERABLE APPREHENSIONS. SUSPICION IS WIDESPREAD THAT US ENVISAGES MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT INVOLVING ONLY INSUBSTANTIAL ALTERATIONS IN ISRAEL'S FAVOR OF ISRAEL'S PRE-JUNE 1967 LINES. ALTHOUGH ISRAELIS THEMSELVES ARE APPARENTLY BECOMING MORE FLEXIBLE ON TERRITORIAL ISSUES (TEL AVIV 9300), THEY HAVE DEFINITELY NOT REACHED THIS POINT. PRESS COMMENTARIES AND OUR CONTACTS ANTICIPATE STIFF ARGUMENT WITH US OVER TERRITORIAL ISSUE, WITH POSSIBLE LINKAGE OF US OFFER OF DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT TO CALL FOR MORE FLEXIBLE ISRAELI POSITION. THERE ARE MANY VOICES CALLING FOR GOI TO CLEAR AIR WITH US OVER THIS PROBLEM FORTHWITH, AND NOT WAIT UNTIL MID-POINT OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE, BY FINDING OUT EXACTLY HOW FAR APART ISRAELI AND US VIEWS ARE.

6. ONE WOULD EXPECT VOICING OF THESE ANXIETIES TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY USUAL DIRE PREDICTIONS OF US ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE ITS VIEWPOINT ON ISRAEL RE TERRITORIAL ISSUE, BUT AT MOMENT ISRAELIS ARE STOPPING SHORT OF SUCH PREDICTIONS. EITHER ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT SOMEHOW THEY WILL BE ABLE TO WORK OUT PROSPECTIVE DIFFERENCES WITH US; OR THEY ARE SO CONCERNED THAT IMPOSITION MAY BE JUST AROUND CORNER THAT THEY HAVE DECIDED SILENCE IS BEST POLICY. TYPICAL VIEW WAS THAT EXPRESSED IN HAARETZ EDITORIAL NOV 14. EDITORIALIST COMPLAINED THAT SECRETARY IN HIS PEKING INTERVIEW, IN LINKING IDEA OF US-ISRAELI DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT WITH SUBSTANTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS, WAS TRYING TO DICTATE TO ISRAEL HOW PEACE CONFERENCE SHOULD COME OUT. WRITER ALSO COMPLAINED THAT THIS US POSTURE WOULD ENCOURAGE ARAB TERRITORIAL DEMANDS. BUT THEN HE CAUTIONED THAT EVEN RETENTION OF ALL OCCUPIED TERRITORY WOULD NOT SOLVE ISRAEL'S SECURITY PROBLEM IF ISRAEL DID NOT HAVE US POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THAT ISRAEL HAD BETTER LOOK CAREFULLY AT SECRETARY'S IDEAS IN THIS CONTEXT.

7. THUS, ISRAELI FACE DILEMMA IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP, AND
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THEY KNOW IT. AS LONG AS THEY WERE GENERALLY CONVINCED THEY WERE SPECIAL INSTRUMENT IN US GLOBAL STRATEGY AND THUS WERE

REAL US ASSET, THEY FELT STRONG ENOUGH IN EQUATION TO HAVE THEIR VIEWS PREVAIL A GOOD PART OF THE TIME. NOW THEY ARE NOT QUITE SO SURE WHOSE VIEWS ARE GOING TO PREVAIL ON KEY ISSUES.
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Draft Date: 20 NOV 1973
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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Disposition History: n/a
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